



**What is the 29 Palms Proposed
Training Land Acquisition and Airspace Establishment Project?
Frequently Asked Questions
February 25, 2011**



**ALTERNATIVE SIX IS THE OPTIMAL ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERING OPERATIONAL AND
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT FACTORS TOGETHER**

1. Why did the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy (DON) select Alternative 6 as the *preferred alternative*?

- Alternative 6 is selected in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as the preferred alternative because it is the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together.
- Alternative 6 was developed in response to public comments and was designed to preserve public access to important off-road recreation areas during periods when Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training did not require use of those lands. It would allow for reopening to public recreation use approximately 40,000 acres of the acquisition area for 10 months a year.
- Alternative 6 does not meet the MEB training operational requirements as well as Alternative 1, but Alternative 1 does not provide for public access to any of the training lands that would be acquired. (*From an operational perspective, Alternative 1 is the best alternative.*)
- While Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative, it is a very poor alternative from an operational perspective.

2. Is this a done deal?

- No. The public may comment on the DEIS from 25 February through 26 May – in writing, on the web and at public meetings. (See the addresses below on this page.)
- In addition, three public comment meetings will be held on the DEIS: one on April 12, 2011 in Joshua Tree; one on April 13, 2011 in Ontario; and a third on April 14, 2011 in Victorville.
- Comments received at the meetings and submitted in writing during the comment period will be evaluated in preparation of the Final EIS – and will be part of the record in front of the Department of the Navy when it makes its Record of Decision (ROD) about whether and how to proceed to meet Marine Corps' MEB training requirements.
- If the ROD determines that land acquisition is needed, then a formal withdrawal request will be made to Congress, and it will have to approve the withdrawal.
- If the ROD determines that land acquisition is needed then the Navy would also request that the FAA proceed to evaluate the Department of the Navy's request to establish corresponding Special Use Airspace (SUA), or to modify existing SUA.
- Any non-federal lands would be acquired at fair market value.

For Further Information Please Contact

**29Palms Training Land/Airspace Acquisition Project – (phone) 760-830-3764
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3. What does the DEIS show about the impacts to the environment of the proposed action?

- As analyzed under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Less than Significant Impacts on air quality, socio economics, public health and safety, visual resources, transportation (except for Alternative 3), noise, geological resources and water resources.
- As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Significant Impacts on land use, recreation (except Alternative 3), airspace management and biological resources.
- As analyzed under NEPA and CEQ guidelines, the DEIS shows that the alternatives studied would have Less than Significant Impacts on cultural resources, although when added to known projects also in the region the effects could become Significant.
- Special Conservation Measures would be implemented with the proposed action to avoid or minimize potential impacts.
- The table below shows a comparison of the impacts by resource type and alternative.

Summary of Environmental Impact Evaluation						
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5	Alternative 6 (Preferred)
Change In Conditions						
Land Acquired (acres)	201,657	134,863	198,580	201,657	180,353	167,971
Restricted Public Access?	No	No	No	Yes - All	Yes - All	Yes (38,137 acres)
MEB Building Block Training	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (108,530 acres)
Change in Personnel	70	65	59	77	77	77
Resource Area Impacts						
Land Use	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Recreation	SI	SI	LSI	SI	SI	SI
Socioeconomics	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Public Health and Safety	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Visual Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Transportation	LSI	LSI	SI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Airspace Management	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Air Quality	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Noise	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Biological Resources	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Cultural Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Geological Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI
Water Resources	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI	LSI

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MARINE CORPS REQUIREMENTS DRIVE THE 29 PALMS LAND/AIRSPACE STUDY

1. What is the training requirement driving the project?

- Marines must train as they fight to prepare for the certainty and uncertainty of combat. Realistic training is for the safety of the Marines put in harm's way.
- With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, lessons learned from combat in the 1990s and operations over the last decade, and the addition of new weapons systems, changes in Marine Corps doctrine led to the establishment of an enduring requirement for Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) sustained (48-72 hours), combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training.
- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) training exercise requires sustained, continuous offensive action (combined arms, live fire and maneuver), with three battalions moving abreast—in three different corridors—and with, at a minimum, two battalions converging on a single objective. The MEB includes a Ground Combat Element, an Air Combat Element, a Command Element and a Logistics Combat Element.
- The term “combined-arms” refers to the use of ground-based and airborne weapons systems, including direct and indirect fire, in the training exercise.

2. What do you mean by “Marines must train as they fight?”

- Training is mission rehearsal. To meet training requirements, Marines must train under conditions that closely approximate those of the battlefield.
- By training as they fight, Marines become proficient in tactics, techniques, and procedures both as individuals and as units. This training concept is as essential for success in military operations as it is in nearly all other team activities.
- Marines will instinctively do as they are trained. Because Marines are equipped and deployed to combat as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), they must train to the MAGTF training standards before deployment.
- Marines need to train as a MAGTF to succeed. Doing less will jeopardize their safety and degrade mission readiness. A MEB, one type of MAGTF of about 15,000 Marines, is the Marine Corps' primary contingency response force.
- A MEB must train realistically, with all elements – ground combat, air combat, logistics and command – involved in the sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training exercise.

3. Why the new requirement?

- The end of the Cold War brought the MEB forward as the premier force to respond to global crises. This resulted from a number of studies and analyses undertaken over a period of years to adjust Marine Corps war-fighting and training doctrine so that it could meet its role in the nation's national security and national military strategies in this new era.

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- A Marine Corps study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), concluded that a MEB had to train as an integrated combat team – without the use of distributed or representational forces – to replicate the conditions of actual combat. The Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC), a body constituted of the senior Marine Corps general officers, concurred with this requirement and approved the MEB training requirement.

4. Who established the requirement?

- The Marine Corps' Training and Education Command (TECOM), the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), with the concurrence of the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC), established the MEB sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training requirement after careful study of doctrine, lessons learned from recent combat operations and an evaluation of new and foreseeable weapons systems and platforms.

5. Will USMC requirements change within the near future?

- No, Marine Corps training requirements are based on enduring doctrine and meeting the Marine Corps role in the National Military Strategy. These are unlikely to change in the near term.

6. Are there plans for additional acquisitions after this one?

- Although the Marine Corps does not currently foresee other acquisition requests, it will continually study training requirements shaped by emerging developments in doctrine and systems.

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POTENTIAL TRAINING LANDS RESPOND TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. What is driving the request for new land and airspace for MEB training?

- A Marine Corps study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) concluded that there is no current Department of Defense range that provides space sufficient to meet the MEB sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training requirement.
- After a lengthy review of a number of options to meet sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training, the Marine Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) authorized a study of potential land acquisition and the establishment of corresponding Special Use Airspace, or modification of current Special Use Airspace, as a means to meet this vital Marine Corps training requirement under Marine Corps Strategy 21, the Marine Corps' foundational strategy document.

2. Why is the study of lands focused on the area near the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, California?

- The CNA study concluded that the U.S. Southwest range complex provided the best training area for a MEB, but that this training requirement could only be fully met with an expansion of the training range lands and airspace at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) at Twentynine Palms, California.
- MCAGCC is the “center of excellence” for Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) training, so it is important to ensure the capability at MCAGCC to achieve sustained, combined-arms, live fire and maneuver MEB training and to enhance such training for other large-scale MAGTFs.
- More than 90 percent of the Marines deploying to combat receive their final training at MCAGCC, and any additional lands acquired to meet the MEB training requirement would also provide additional training capability to meet the full range of current and foreseeable Marine Corps training, including for individual and unit Building Block Training leading up to MEB training.
- Additional land and associated airspace would allow the Marine Corps to utilize current *and* planned weapons and systems in training.

3. Doesn't the Marine Corps have enough land at MCAGCC?

- No, the maneuver and training areas at MCAGCC are insufficient to meet Marine Corps training requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.
- MCAGCC cannot accommodate all the units that currently need to train.
- Only 40 percent of MCAGCC is available for this type of combined-arms, live-fire and mechanized maneuver training. The remaining 60 percent of the land supports safety buffers, area for infrastructure, natural resources protection, or is otherwise unavailable due to terrain restrictions.

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- Marines will continue to be good stewards of the environment, particularly of the natural and cultural resources placed under their control.

4. Who establishes the land-use restrictions that limit training?

- Some of the guidelines to protect human health and safety, or natural or cultural resources are internal USMC guidelines and requirements.
- Other restrictions are from resource agencies such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
- The terrain restrictions preclude, in many places, the type of training the Marine Corps needs to conduct.

5. Why study such a large amount of land and why study these particular areas?

- The alternatives the Marine Corps has examined range from the smallest amount of land that would meet minimum requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training, to ones that could meet 100 percent of the requirement.
- To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps team developed a range of reasonable alternatives that could meet MEB training requirements, as well as a No Action Alternative. A recently completed Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analyzed the potential impacts of the project on lands to the west, south and east of the base. (Analysis that led to the selection of the alternatives to be studied showed that lands to the north cannot support MEB training.) From the study of the operational and environmental impacts of these analyses, the DEIS determined that the preferred alternative – the optimal alternative considering operational and environmental impact factors together – is Alternative 6.
- Once public comments on the DEIS are evaluated and the Final Environmental Impact Statement is published, the Department of the Navy would issue a Record of Decision (ROD) that could choose one of the alternatives, a combination of alternatives, parts of alternatives or the No Action Alternative. Only then would it be certain what lands might actually be proposed for addition to MCAGCC, if any.
- After public comments during the project scoping period and operational analysis, some lands from the original study areas were released from the withdrawal request. Approximately 33,000 acres of public, federal lands were relinquished from the EIS study areas originally segregated by the Bureau of Land Management from further development. Further study had shown that some of those lands would not provide sufficient training value. Other lands were released to more closely align with terrain features, to minimize conflicts with occupied private parcels, and in response to public comments. A total of approximately 60,000 acres (federal, state and privately owned lands) were removed from the EIS west, east and south study areas. Approximately 379,000 acres were studied in preparation of the DEIS.

6. Why can't Marines use the National Training Center at Fort Irwin; in other words, why not share training lands with the Army?

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- Although the Army and the Marine Corps often serve side-by-side and execute similar missions, they have different training requirements. As a result, NTC does not have ranges capable of supporting MEB-level sustained, combined-arms live-fire and maneuver training.
- 7. Given that the nation is trying to downsize the number of troops deployed to operations overseas, do you really need this land?**
- As the nation's requirements to prepare Marines for overseas deployments are reduced, training tempos and exercises at installations like MCAGCC may decrease, but sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training will still be required.
 - MCAGCC is likely to be the premier service-level training facility for Marines in the future, with a large volume of training activity.
 - Because MCAGCC is the premier service-level training facility for the Marine Corps, large-scale MAGTF combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training, such as for a MEB, is a logical extension of the type of training that has gone on at MCAGCC for decades.
 - Marines are the first to fight for our nation and they must always be prepared to deploy immediately. Providing the land and airspace sufficient to meet the MEB training requirement would play an important role in helping the Marine Corps to fulfill this training requirement.
 - With the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) designated as the premier force to respond to global crises, sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training will remain a critical Marine Corps training requirement.
 - The Secretary of the Navy recently observed that, despite downsizing of the force, the Marine Corps continues to have a requirement to have the capability of putting two brigades across the beach in a contested environment.
 -
- 8. I thought the military was giving up land because of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process; why are you seeking more?**
- The potential MCAGCC land acquisition is being studied because there is currently no location where the Marine Corps can sufficiently conduct the sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training it needs to best prepare Marines for deployment to combat. BRAC is a process that seeks to "right-size" our nation's military basing; working to ensure that MCAGCC can meet MEB training requirements is part of that right-sizing effort.
 - BRAC closures result when an installation is in excess to military requirements.

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POTENTIAL SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE RESPONDS TO TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Why is the Marine Corps studying the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace?

- Advanced weapons systems now provide military forces with greater capabilities for detecting and countering enemy threats at greater distances. This requires that range and airspace areas be expanded, where necessary and feasible, to enable these forces to train in an environment that is more representative of realistic combat conditions. For that reason, the Marine Corps requires corresponding training airspace to support MEB training requirements.
- A Restricted Area is used to contain the effects of ground-based and airborne weapons systems to ensure public safety. Military Operations Areas (MOAs) also provide airspace where attack maneuver and other activities can be carried out, but no live fire occurs in a MOA. Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA), which normally overlays a MOA (at altitudes above 18,000 feet), is like a MOA in that it allows non-military aircraft to be vectored through at the discretion of the local air traffic control authority.
- A Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) is a Marine Air Ground Task Force. The Marine Corps deploys to combat as a combined-arms unit, which includes air and ground combat elements (along with command and logistics elements).
- To fulfill MEB training requirements, both training lands and training Special Use Airspace must be sufficient to meet requirements for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training.

2. How will this airspace decision be made?

- Throughout the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, both land and airspace issues and resource impacts will be evaluated through the analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), as the civil aviation authority, is an important cooperating agency in the project EIS.
- During the EIS process, the FAA will cooperate with the Department of the Navy during the analysis of alternatives to establish, expand or modify Special Use Airspace. With the FAA's cooperation and expertise, the Department of the Navy will be better able to prepare an EIS that is fully sufficient for FAA decision making.
- If the Department of the Navy Record of Decision (ROD) for this study determines that Special Use Airspace needs to be established or modified to meet Marine Corps training requirements, the Marine Corps will submit an airspace proposal to provide such supporting airspace for any training land acquisition. The FAA would conduct formal airspace customer feasibility forums, and undertake its established processes to analyze that airspace proposal request.
- If the FAA concludes that additional Special Use Airspace should be established, or current airspace modified, at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) to support

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MEB training requirements, it would establish or modify such Special Use Airspace per its established processes.

3. Would this program result in any new restrictions being placed on commercial airline or civil aviation over flights?

- Existing MCAGCC airspace impacts on commercial or civil aviation flights over or near MCAGCC might be extended over any newly-acquired land due to safety issues involved with live-fire, combined arms air-ground task force training.
- The Marine Corps will work with the FAA and aviation stakeholders on issues examined during the EIS.
- Through its long-standing working relationship with the FAA, the Marine Corps continues to work to minimize disruption to the National Airspace System, and any Special Use Airspace established or modified would be managed, as it is now, to release it for use by all aircraft in the National Airspace System when not needed for military training.
- The Marine Corps supports FAA efforts to optimize the safe use of airspace over the installation by commercial and civil aviation.

4. What types of airspace are used to support military training at MCAGCC?

- Restricted Area (RA): Non-military aircraft are prohibited from entering during military training activities that involve live fire; MCAGCC releases it for use by all aircraft in the National Airspace System when not needed for military training.
- Military Operations Area (MOA): A military operations area is airspace designated outside of Class A airspace (18,000 to 60,000 feet) to separate or segregate certain nonhazardous military activities from Instrument Flight Rule (IFR) traffic and to identify for Visual Flight Rule (VFR) traffic where these activities are conducted.
- Air Traffic Control Assigned Airspace (ATCAA): Similar to a MOA (and usually overlaying a MOA) within Class A airspace (18,000 to 60,000 feet), non-military aircraft may fly in ATCAA during military training so long as air traffic controllers can maintain IFR separation from military aircraft; only non-hazardous military activities may be undertaken in ATCAA.

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THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ENSURES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND INPUTS

- 1. How would the Marine Corps acquire any new land? What is the process? Who makes the ultimate decisions on the Marine Corps request?**
 - After the EIS process is completed, the Department of the Navy will issue a Record of Decision (ROD), indicating the alternative, or combination or portion of alternatives, it seeks to pursue, if any.
 - Military land withdrawal legislation would be submitted for approval to Congress, and must be enacted into law.
 - Any non-federal lands would be acquired at fair market value.
 - The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) would determine whether to establish additional, or to modify current, Special Use Airspace to complement any newly acquired training lands.
- 2. What is the involvement of the BLM on this project?**
 - The BLM is a cooperating agency on the Environmental Impact Statement studies.
 - The BLM and the Marine Corps have held public meetings to hear stakeholder input regarding the Department of the Navy's military training land withdrawal/segregation request.
- 4. What is the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) process and how have citizens engaged?**
 - The BLM issued a public notice of the proposed land withdrawal in the Federal Register on September 15, 2008. The BLM and the USMC held public meetings on October 23 and 24, 2008 at which time the public had a chance to review and comment on the proposed withdrawal. There was a 90-day public comment period through December 15, 2008, during which time the public made nearly 2,300 comments to the BLM. The BLM provided these comments to the Marine Corps during the EIS scoping period that ran from October 30, 2008 to January 31, 2009. As a cooperating agency, the BLM coordinates closely with the Marine Corps during all steps in the project's planning process.
 - In June 2009, the Department of the Navy removed approximately 60,000 acres of land it had originally proposed for study, including approximately 33,000 acres of public lands. These lands were in each of the three EIS study areas (east, west and south), and represent nearly 15 percent of the original study area. On January 25, 2010 the BLM published a Notice in the Federal Register that ended the segregation on these public lands on February 24, 2010.
 - In September 2010, the BLM published a notice in the Federal Register to initiate a Withdrawal in Aid of Legislation. This Withdrawal is designed to keep in effect the segregation of use effect on the land under study in the project EIS. Public comment on that proposed action remains in effect through the DEIS public comment meetings in April 2011.

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4. Who owns the private lands? What effects does segregation have on private lands?

- Segregation only affects federal land, and it prevents the establishment of permanent interests that would conflict with the proposed withdrawal for military purposes.
- Private lands are not part of the withdrawal and segregation of public lands process.
- During the EIS process, a concurrent examination will be made of private land ownership in the area.
- Any private lands proposed to be acquired would be purchased through the payment of fair market value.

6. How does the public express its views of the project alternatives? To what extent is the Marine Corps currently coordinating with the public?

- The DEIS analyzed the environmental impacts, on both natural and socio-economic resources, of the various alternatives. Stakeholders – including public agencies; state, local and tribal governments; businesses, non-governmental organizations, including conservationists, recreation enthusiasts and developers and individuals – commented early in the process on the alternatives and issues to be studied.
- Nearly 20,000 public comments were received during the three-month EIS scoping period that ended January 31, 2009. Stakeholders now have a chance to review and comment on the Draft EIS alternatives, issues, analysis and potential mitigation during a 90-day comment period that runs from February 25, 2011 through May 26, 2011, and then, again, for 30 days on release of the Final EIS at the end of December 2011.
- Representatives of the Marine Corps will continue to work closely with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the FAA throughout the EIS process. These cooperating agencies will help ensure that all stakeholder concerns are addressed during the EIS.
- The Marine Corps, including Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) personnel, regularly meet with stakeholders to discuss issues, both aboard its installations and in community forums, to draw community perspectives into its planning processes.

7. Why were there two 90-day public comment periods (one running through December 15, 2008; the other through January 31, 2009)?

- The first comment period was in connection with the BLM's public notice for the segregation of lands for the Marine Corps' EIS study. Comments during this period were made to the BLM, but have been shared with the Marine Corps.
- The second comment period was for the "scoping period" for the EIS study. During this period the public was invited to provide comments to the Marine Corps on issues and the proposed alternatives for study in the NEPA process. These comments helped to shape the range of reasonable alternatives and substantive issues that will be studied in the EIS.

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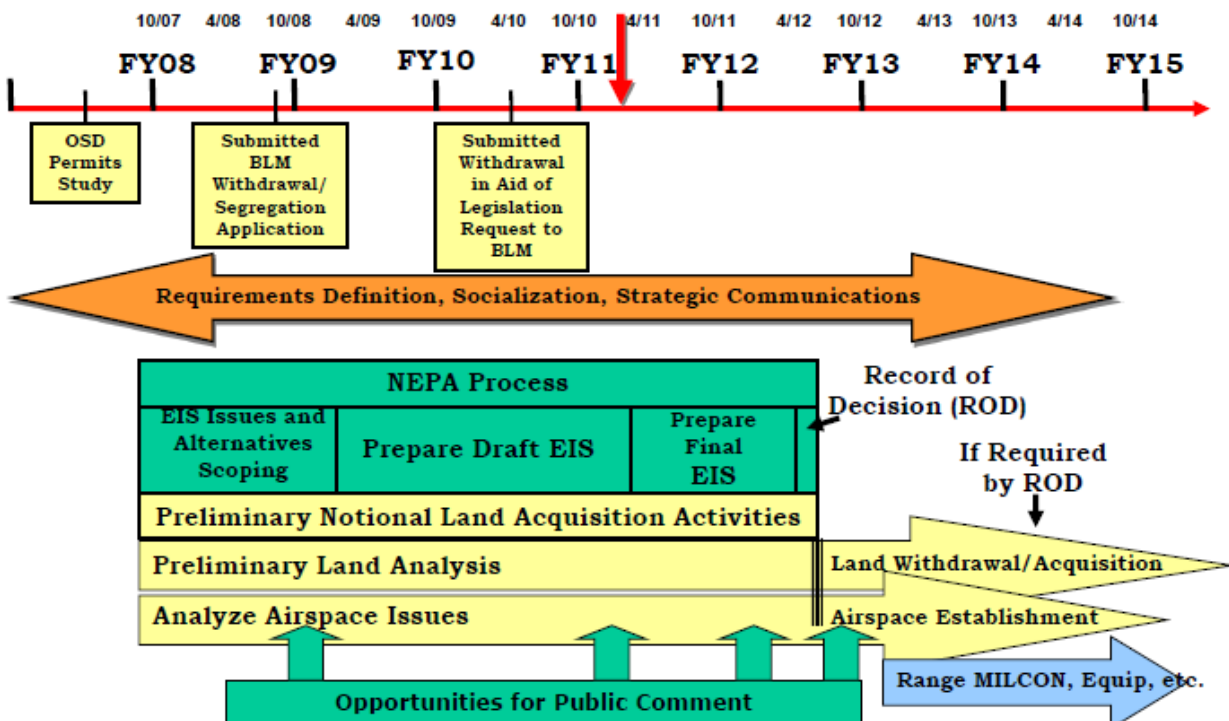
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- The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy team have given consideration to all comments received during the past comment periods, and will give full consideration to all comments received during the upcoming comment periods as well.

8. What is the project timeline?

- The EIS study process will take up to three years to complete, including public review and comment. The Draft EIS was published on February 25, 2011; the Final EIS is scheduled for release at the end of December 2011.
- The Department of the Navy plans to issue a Record of Decision (ROD) in April 2012 after the Final EIS is completed.
- If called for in the ROD, military land withdrawal legislation would be submitted for approval to Congress in 2012 and must be enacted into law.
- If called for in the ROD, the FAA would undertake their established process to consider the Department of the Navy's request for establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace in 2012, upon issuance of the ROD. It is expected to complete this process in 2013.
- If the ROD supports the acquisition of additional lands and/or the establishment or modification of Special Use Airspace, the goal will be to have Marines training in those new training lands and airspace by 2015.
- The timeline below displays those objectives.



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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ARE BEING CAREFULLY STUDIED

1. What threatened or endangered species are on the base?

- There is one listed species, the threatened Desert Tortoise. Over 380 Desert Tortoise have been hatched and reared at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) during the first few years of a program undertaken with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and academic researchers. The Marine Corps at MCAGCC also works to protect and study such sensitive species as the Nelson Big Horn Sheep, various bat species and desert plants on base.

2. What have the resource surveys undertaken for the EIS concluded about desert tortoises and other species, as well as cultural resources, in the study areas?

- The resource studies are now complete and were used in preparation of the DEIS to evaluate impacts to biological and cultural resources by the different alternatives and have been used to prepare a Biological Assessment for review by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. All of the alternatives studied showed impacts on these resources, some significant and some less than significant.
- Special Conservation Measures would be implemented with the proposed action to avoid or minimize potential impacts.
- In addition to these natural resource studies, consultations have occurred with Native American Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that cultural resources are appropriately protected and managed.
- Stakeholders will have a chance to review and comment on the natural and cultural resources analyses set out in the Draft EIS during the public comment period ending May 26, 2011 and at the three public comment meetings to be held April 12, 13, and 14, 2011.

3. Would the additional noise bother the outlying communities?

- The Marine Corps has studied potential noise impacts as part of the required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analysis, and the studies show less than significant impacts from noise.
- The Marine Corps would continue to take measures to minimize noise to MCAGCC neighbors, but most noise from training would continue to stay within the installation boundaries.
- Stakeholders will have a chance to review and comment on the noise analysis set out in the Draft EIS during the public comment period ending May 26, 2011, and at the three public comment meetings to be held April 12, 13, and 14, 2011.

4. Is the USMC considering asking the Congress to de-designate wilderness areas to the east of MCAGCC for potential expansion to the east?

- The Marine Corps has not proposed land acquisition in any congressionally designated wilderness areas.

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- In the Wilderness Act of 1964, Congress established a National Wilderness Preservation System. In 1994 Congress designated three areas near to MCAGCC as wilderness areas: Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness, Sheephole Valley Wilderness and Cadiz Dunes Wilderness.
- These wilderness areas are administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such a manner as they are left unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The wilderness designation provides protection of those areas and the preservation of their wilderness character.

5. Has the BLM provided recreational and other data to the USMC?

- Yes, and the BLM works with the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy as a cooperating agency in evaluating the resource impacts of the proposed alternatives studied in the EIS, including any losses of socio-economic values, recreation and mining.

6. Do “off-roaders” currently use the potential acquisition land near MCAGCC?

- They use the Johnson Valley Off-Highway Vehicle Area within the project’s west study area. To a much lesser extent, similar recreation occurs in portions of the project’s east and south study areas.
- The impacts of the various alternatives on recreation use of the area have been studied in preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Stakeholders will have a chance to review and comment on this analysis during the public comment period ending May 26, 2011, and at the three public comment meetings to be held April 12, 13, and 14, 2011.
- Stakeholder comments provided during the earlier scoping period on the alternatives presented for public comment helped to establish the range of reasonable alternatives that was studied in the DEIS – including the development of Alternative 6 (the preferred alternative) that preserves public access approximately 10 months of the year to the Hammers and to 40,000 acres of land in this area for off-road and other recreation use, during times when it would not be needed for MEB training.

7. Would off-roaders be able to use it during the EIS study period?

- Yes, during the EIS study period, public access for hiking or off-road vehicle activity will continue to be allowed.

8. Would off-roaders be able to use it after the acquisition?

- In the preferred alternative, approximately 40,000 acres of any lands withdrawn for military training (including the Hammers) would be made available to the public for off-road and other recreation use, during the approximately 10 months per year when it would not be needed for MEB training.
- On any lands acquired for training on which dud-producing live-fire occurred, safety reasons would prohibit any public access.

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- The alternatives studied in the DEIS were analyzed for the impacts that would result from the potential elimination or restriction of public access to any lands that might be acquired. Stakeholders will have a chance to review and comment on this analysis during the public comment period ending May 26, 2011, and at the three public comment meetings to be held April 12, 13, and 14, 2011.
- MCAGCC would use any acquired land for its training operations and if for safety reasons the public could not be allowed to enter after live-fire training, the land would no longer be available to off-roaders.
- Two alternatives presented for discussion during the public scoping process call for “west-to-east” maneuver and the use of non-dud producing ordnance (ordnance that does not have an explosive charge) until task forces reach the current installation boundary. The manageability and training constraints of such a potential shared land use will be addressed in the EIS.
- In addition, a new Alternative Six – now selected as the preferred alternative – was developed in response to comments received during the scoping period. In Alternative Six, approximately 40,000 acres of withdrawn lands, including the popular Hammers area, would remain open for public use approximately ten months of the year, when sustained, combined-arms, live-fire maneuver MEB training is not occurring at the installation. Non dud-producing ordnance would be used in this 40,000 acre area during MEB training.

9. Where would the off-roaders go if the Marine Corps acquires the land?

- The Marine Corps’ preferred alternative would allow for the continued off-road recreation use of 40,000 acres of land in the Johnson Valley, including the Hammers, during the approximately 10 months a year when MEB training is not underway in that area. The Bureau of Land Management and other land-managing agencies would determine other, suitable locations in the region for off-road vehicle activity.

10. Would historic or archeological resources be impacted by the acquisition?

- The MCAGCC Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs (NREA) mission is to develop and maintain awareness of the natural and cultural resources at MCAGCC and the importance of resource protection, to develop a plan to catalogue, protect and mitigate any losses of those resources at MCAGCC.
- Potential impacts to cultural resources, if any, resulting from a proposed alternative were identified and studied in the DEIS, and consultations have occurred with Native American Tribes and the State Historic Preservation Officer to ensure that cultural resources are appropriately protected and managed.
- Special Conservation Measures would be implemented with the proposed action to avoid or minimize potential impacts.

11. Would dust generation increase and would it impact local communities?

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- Potential dust generation issues were studied as air quality impacts in the DEIS and were found to be less than significant.
- The Marine Corps does not anticipate any impact on local communities from dust.
- MCAGCC's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan ensures coordination with military training organizations to minimize disturbances to training areas (i.e., road proliferation, dust control, etc.).

12. Would water quality or quantity be impacted?

- Water resources impacts were studied in preparation of the DEIS and the studies found that any impacts to water would be less than significant.

13. What about airborne chemicals, ground contamination, noise and restrictions to traffic (e.g., on Hwy 247 or Amboy Road)?

- Impacts to the environment from these types of factors were studied in the DEIS and it was found that the impacts to public health and safety would be less than significant. Impacts to traffic would be less than significant in all alternatives, except they would be significant in Alternative 3 (which was not selected as the preferred alternative).

14. What effect does the segregation request have on energy projects proposed for the area?

- Projects that would be incompatible with military training will be kept "on hold" until such time as the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps complete the EIS and issue the Record of Decision.
- At any time that public lands are determined to no longer have military training value, the Department of the Navy will release the segregation hold on them and this limitation would cease to exist, as was done in June 2009 when the Marine Corps relinquished interest in 15% of the lands – approximately 60,000 acres – in the study areas.

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MCAGCC, A PREMIER TRAINING FACILITY

1. What is the estimated cost for land acquisition?

- Initial estimates for potential project costs – environmental reviews, regulatory compliance and real estate acquisition – to complete the potential land acquisition were approximately \$50 million for the smallest acquisition alternative. Estimates will be developed for the various alternatives that will be studied in accord with NEPA, and this number continues to be an accurate estimate.

2. Where would the money come from for any land acquisition?

- The money for land acquisition would come from Congressional appropriations through the regular military construction program.

3. Who trains here?

- Currently, over 90 percent of the Marines deploying to combat in Afghanistan receive training at MCAGCC before deployment, as well as units who are stationed at the base and units from other services and from other nations.
- Some units from the Army train here to hone select skills after they have trained for their “core” skills at their own bases.
- Many multi-national forces train here as well.

4. What units train regularly on base?

- The base is home to many First Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) units, including the 7th Marine Regiment; 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion; 1st Tank Battalion; the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines; “D” Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion (AAV); Combat Logistics Battalion 7, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374; and VMU-1.
- Marine Reserve units also train at MCAGCC.

5. Do other countries’ militaries train here? Which ones?

- Yes, military units from many countries have trained here, including units from the United Kingdom and Singapore.

6. What units are currently training at MCAGCC? Are they the next unit to head out?

- For security purposes, the Marine Corps does not discuss future deployment plans of military units.

7. Do the units return to the MCAGCC between each combat tour?

- Yes, because MCAGCC offers units the unique, comprehensive training package. Training includes taking the lessons learned from the combat theater and incorporating them into training to ensure that Marines are trained with the most up-to-date information.

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8. What kind of training do they receive at MCAGCC?

- Among other training, they receive Marine Air-Ground Task Force combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training, cultural awareness training, and Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT) training.

9. What is MOUT and why is it important?

- A “MOUT” is a “Military Operations in an Urban Terrain” training facility. It provides for training of Marines to replicate their operations in an urban environment, such as those presented in Afghanistan and Iraq, where there is close-quarter battle and the presence of many non-combatants.

10. What future weapons systems will be used here?

- MCAGCC would need to accommodate the Joint Strike Fighter, the Osprey and new munitions.

11. How long is MEB training and where would it occur?

- MEB training at MCAGCC would occur up to twice a year and would last for just under 30 days, including a culminating sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training exercise of three days duration.
- MEB training would occur throughout MCAGCC’s current installation and in any newly acquired lands, and support Special Use Airspace.
- In the preferred alternative – Alternative 6 – only non dud-producing ordnance would be used for training in the 40,000 acres to which the public would have access during periods of time that MEB training is not occurring.

12. How long does a Battalion train at MCAGCC?

- Typically, there is a 30-day training window.

13. Would depleted uranium rounds be used aboard MCAGCC in training activities, and are they already used aboard the base?

- There is no requirement to use depleted uranium rounds in training.

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INCIDENTAL PROJECT QUESTIONS

1. What would the Marine Corps build on this land?

- If lands were acquired, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) would construct such assets as required to support training, including targetry and roads.

2. Would there be an increase in the permanent party population aboard the base?

- There would only be an increase of up to 77 personnel as a result of the training land and airspace study effort.
- However, the Commandant of the Marine Corps had identified MCAGCC for an increase of military personnel stationed aboard the base now in light of the Congress' approval of expanding the Marine Corps to 202,000 Marines by 2011. Even more recent proposals by DOD to reduce the size of this increase might require some of the expanded force to be stationed aboard MCAGCC. Although Marine Corps force structure size is under evaluation by the national leadership, this does not change the requirement for sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver MEB training.

3. To what extent does the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) apply to this project?

- The Marine Corps has met with the State of California to discuss CEQA requirements for state actions that could be undertaken following the project decision. State agencies are encouraged to use NEPA documents when such documents comply with CEQA. To the extent practicable, the EIS will incorporate CEQA requirements to allow state agencies to utilize the EIS analysis to support any future project-specific analyses that may be required by CEQA.

4. Will greenhouse gas emissions and climate change due to global warming be analyzed?

- The Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy are complying with any requirements to study greenhouse gas emissions and climate change issues in preparation of the EIS.

5. How long has this potential acquisition been in the works?

- The Marine Corps' Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) initiated the effort in 2002 by asking for a study to determine how best to meet future training requirements. Once MROC determined the requirement to provide sustained, combined-arms, live-fire and maneuver training for a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, it initiated further studies to see how to meet those training requirements. A study, conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses, showed that the ranges in the Southwest United States provided the best opportunity to meet this requirement, but that it could only be met with the expansion of the MCAGCC at Twentynine Palms. The MROC authorized a study to look into potential land acquisition at MCAGCC. That decision has been reviewed at various levels within the Department of the

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Navy (DoN) and the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Marine Corps has received validation and confirmation through all echelons.

6. When did the Marine Corps first notify the public of the project?

- Once the requirement had been validated by the MROC, DoN and DoD, and permission to undertake NEPA and other analyses was approved in the summer of 2007, the Marine Corps immediately notified Congress, issued a press release and sent letters from MCAGCC's Commanding General to community leaders and organizations. Since then, MCAGCC and HQMC have held meetings with Members of Congress and their staffs, State Government officials in Sacramento, the BLM and FAA, and with community stakeholders such as off-road vehicle enthusiasts, energy companies, the film industry, MCAGCC neighbors, local government officials, local airports and pilot associations, and others. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to undertake the NEPA analysis and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published on October 30, 2008. Public meetings were held on December 3, 4 and 5, 2008, so that the public could learn more about the alternatives and provide input to the Marine Corps on the issues that should be evaluated in the EIS.

7. Can the public get GIS files, specific maps or other products to assist in their analysis of the DEIS?

- The project has loaded necessary maps and other documents onto the MCAGCC project website: <http://www.marines.mil/unit/29palms/las/>.
- GIS files can be requested through the USMC process outlined at <http://www.marines.mil/news/messages/Pages/2000/Messages00all367.aspx>

8. What would be the costs and impacts of transporting needed equipment to MCAGCC to support MEB training?

- MCAGCC maintains a great deal of equipment at the installation to support training and to minimize transportation costs and impacts.

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